



Testimony
Betsy Gara
Executive Director
Connecticut Council of Small Towns
Planning & Development Committee
March 11, 2013

**SUPPORT - SB-847 - AN ACT CONCERNING THE COMMISSION FOR
TECHNOLOGY ADVANCEMENT**

The Connecticut Council of Small Towns (COST) *strongly supports* SB-847 which will help provide municipalities with affordable access to the state's broadband communications network, the Nutmeg Network. This is one of COST's top priorities for 2013.

Assisting towns in connecting to the statewide high speed network at reasonable rates will help:

- 1) Reduce costs associated with providing critical services to residents and businesses, including enhancing the coordination of emergency preparedness and response efforts;
- 2) Facilitate opportunities for towns to share services, such as data storage and back-up;
- 3) Enhance local economic development efforts by providing reliable access to a high speed networks which is highly valued by many small and emerging companies; and
- 4) Eliminate inefficient network silos and redundancies that separate municipal functions.

SB-847 will help provide towns with affordable access to broadband by specifying that the plan must extend access to municipal facilities, including town halls and emergency operations centers, at *reasonable rates*. Currently, municipalities will be eligible to participate in the Nutmeg Network effective October 2013, however, they must pay connectivity rates comparable to the private sector, which are higher than the rates paid by schools, libraries, public safety facilities and the state. As a result, for many towns, it is more affordable to pursue network access through private companies, which undermines the goal of the Nutmeg Network because towns using different networks will not have the interoperability needed to share data.

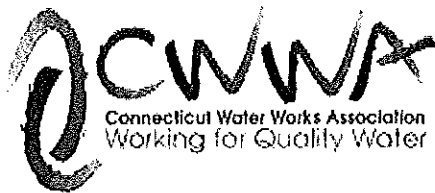
By including municipal representatives from COST and CCM as partners in making decisions about the state's broadband communications infrastructure, including reasonable connectivity rates, SB-847 will help address these issues.

Given the difficult budgetary challenges facing the state and municipalities, SB-847 is a positive step forward in helping towns take advantage of the opportunity to utilize technology to achieve efficiencies, reduce costs and better coordinate and deliver critical services.

COST urges your support.

COST is an advocacy organization committed to giving small towns a strong voice in the legislative process. Its members are Connecticut towns with populations of less than 30,000. COST champions the major policy needs and concerns of Connecticut's suburban and rural towns.

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**Testimony
Elizabeth Gara
Executive Director
Connecticut Water Works Association (CWWA)
Before the Planning & Development Committee
March 11, 2013**

HB-6325 - AN ACT CONCERNING THE ASSIGNMENT OF MORTGAGE DEBTS.

The Connecticut Water Works Association (CWWA) submits the following comments with respect to **HB-6325**, which requires any assignment of a mortgage debt to be recorded. The bill provides a more appropriate mechanism for assisting homeowners facing foreclosure than the law adopted in special session last year, which should be repealed.

Section 129 of Public Act 12-1 (*June, Special Session*) requires municipalities to include a copy of the Notice of Community-Based Resources Form JD-CV-126, attached, with *any* statement sent to a homeowner about a public sewer, water service, or property tax arrearage.

This is imposing an enormous compliance burden on municipal water and sewer departments because the form must be attached to each and every notice relative to an outstanding bill for water and sewer charges. Due to the content of the form, this is creating a significant amount of confusion for customers because the notice appears to involve a foreclosure.

Public Act 12-1 requires the form to include a: 1) reference to both CHFA and Housing and Urban Development-approved counselors, 2) column in the approved housing counselor chart that includes the counties in which each counselor serves, and 3) notification to mortgagors currently in foreclosure that they should contact the Department of Banking's foreclosure assistance hotline for assistance with time sensitive foreclosure concerns.

As a result, customers receiving a copy of the form are contacting the water and sewer departments because they think they are facing some sort of legal action. Customer service representatives and other staff are spending a considerable amount of precious time and resources responding to these inquiries.

Water companies are already required to provide notice to customers regarding billing delinquencies. If delinquent bills are not paid, customers may receive shut off notices and they may contact the departments to make payment arrangements.

By requiring this legal notice to be attached to any statement involving a delinquency, this law has created needless confusion regarding the payment of water and sewer bills.

CWWA urges repeal of this provision.

The Connecticut Water Works Association, Inc. (CWWA) is an association of private, municipal and regional public water supply utilities serving more than 500,000 customers, or population of about 2½ million people, located throughout Connecticut.

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**State of Connecticut Department of Banking
Foreclosure Hotline Bulletin
Community-Based Resources for Connecticut Homeowners in Foreclosure**

Note: Assistance in multiple languages is available through Connecticut Housing Finance Authority (CHFA/HUD)-approved housing counseling agencies (refer to the list below). Ayuda en Español es disponible a través de agencias de consejería de vivienda aprobado por CHFA/HUD (favor de referirse a la lista de abajo).

**Toll-free Mortgage Foreclosure Assistance Hotline: 1-877-472-8313
Department of Banking Website: www.ct.gov/dob**

The free Foreclosure Hotline is open Monday-Friday 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Calls will be returned within two business days. Homeowners who are currently a party to a foreclosure action with time sensitive foreclosure concerns should call the Hotline for assistance. You can also reach the Department of Banking by calling 1-800-831-7225 (toll-free) or 860-240-8299.

**Mortgage Assistance Programs from the
Connecticut Housing Finance Authority (CHFA)**

The Connecticut Housing Finance Authority has two mortgage assistance programs created by the Connecticut General Assembly: (1) the Emergency Mortgage Assistance Program (EMAP), which can help with overdue payments and provide monthly mortgage assistance; and (2) refinancing through CT FAMILIES. For more information, contact a CHFA/HUD-approved housing counseling agency (listed below), call CHFA at 1-877-571-2432, or visit www.chfa.org.

CHFA/HUD-Approved Housing Counselors: CHFA/HUD-approved housing counselors provide free services to Connecticut homeowners and can assist in identifying possible solutions to your financial issues, reviewing your budget, and negotiating with your mortgage company to address your mortgage issues, including federal loan modification programs and CHFA/HUD mortgage assistance programs. CHFA/HUD-approved housing counselors are all trained in handling FHA loans as well as "conventional" loans. They can help you prepare for Foreclosure Mediation and help you submit financial documents to your mortgage company as part of the Mediation process. CHFA/HUD-approved counselors welcome residents from all over Connecticut - you do not have to call the agency closest to you. Note: If your Return Date (located at the top right of the Summons you received) is on or after October 1, 2011, you should have also received a Mediation Information Form and instructions with your foreclosure papers. The Form must be received by the law firm representing your servicer/lender no later than 15 business days before your first mediation session. Even if you are unable to get an appointment with a housing counselor before that deadline, you are still required to submit a completed Mediation Information Form on time.

County	CHFA/HUD-Approved Housing Counseling Agency	Phone
Fairfield	Housing Development Fund, 940 Broad Street, Bridgeport www.hdf-ct.org	203-338-0035
	Mission of Peace, 4270 Main St., Suite 303, Bridgeport www.missionofpeace.com	203-366-4180
	Housing Development Fund, 8 West St., Danbury www.hdf-ct.org	203-798-6527
	Housing Development Fund, 100 Prospect St., Suite 100, Stamford www.hdf-ct.org	203-960-1830
	Urban League of Southern CT, 46 Atlantic St., Stamford www.ulsc.org	203-327-5810
Hartford	Housing Education Resource Center, 901 Wethersfield Ave., Hartford www.herc-inc.org	860-298-4242
	Urban League of Greater Hartford, 140 Woodland St., Hartford www.ulgh.org	860-527-0147
	Co-Opportunity, 20-28 Sargeant St., Hartford www.co-opportunity.org	860-236-3617
	Community Renewal Team, 395 Wethersfield Ave., Hartford www.crlct.org	860-560-5800
	Neighborhood Housing Services of New Britain, 223 Broad St., New Britain www.nhsnb.org	860-224-2433
New Haven	Neighborhood Housing Services of New Haven, 333 Sherman Ave., New Haven www.nhsnnewhaven.org	203-562-0598
	Greater New Haven Community Loan Fund, 171 Orange St., New Haven http://www.theroofproject.org	203-624-7406
New London	Catholic Charities, Diocese of Norwich, 331 Main St., Norwich; 28 Huntington St., New London www.ccfnsn.org	860-880-8346
Fairfield/ Litchfield/ New Haven	Neighborhood Housing Services of Waterbury, 161 North Main St., Waterbury www.nhswaterbury.org (Serves Waterbury, Danbury, and Torrington)	203-753-1886

Legal Resources

Foreclosure Prevention Legal Clinics: The Connecticut Fair Housing Center, the Department of Banking, and the Judicial Branch's Foreclosure Mediation Program present two, free monthly legal clinics for homeowners in foreclosure. The clinics offer information on the process and on preparing for court from a Center attorney, guidance on resources for homeowners from the Department of Banking, and a description of the Mediation Program from a court mediator. After the presentations, homeowners can talk about their situations one-on-one with volunteer attorneys, paralegals, and student volunteers. The monthly clinic in Hartford is the 3rd Tuesday evening of the month and is run by the Connecticut Fair Housing Center and the University of Hartford Paralegal Studies Program. The monthly clinic in Fairfield County is the 3rd Wednesday evening of the month, is sponsored by Bridgeport Mayor Bill Finch, Stamford Mayor Michael Pavia, and Norwalk Mayor Richard Moccia, and is run by the Connecticut Fair Housing Center and Homes Saved By Faith. Its location changes each month among the 3 cities. More information on the clinics (including times and locations) is available on www.ctfairhousing.org or by calling 1-888-247-4401.

Judicial Branch Foreclosure Volunteer Attorney Program: Volunteer attorneys are available to give advice and answer questions about foreclosure at certain courthouses in the state. Homeowners facing foreclosure throughout Connecticut are welcome to attend. Call 860-263-2734 for additional information.

Foreclosure Manual for Self-Represented Homeowners: The Connecticut Fair Housing Center publishes "Representing Yourself in Foreclosure: A Guide for Connecticut Homeowners," a free manual describing the foreclosure and mediation process for self-represented homeowners. Copies are available at many locations, such as CHFA/HUD-approved housing counselors, www.ctfairhousing.org, and by calling the Center at 1-888-247-4401.

Statewide Legal Services (SLS): SLS provides free legal advice and referrals for callers qualifying for its services (guidelines include income limits). You can reach SLS by calling 1-800-453-3320 or 860-344-0380.

Court Service Centers: In certain Superior Court locations, Court Service Centers provide public access computers, printers, fax machines, copiers, phones, and work space for self-represented parties. Refer to www.jud.ct.gov, and go to the Quick Links menu on the home page of the Judicial website for more information.

Lawyer Referral Services: County Bar Associations in Connecticut offer referral services that introduce homeowners to lawyers who can answer questions during an initial half-hour consultation. You can send an email with your questions and availability. Services beyond the 1st half-hour fee will be at the attorney's usual fee.

County	Phone	Fee for 1/2 hour Consultation	Website	Email
Fairfield	203-335-4116	\$35	www.fairfieldlawyerreferral.com	fcba@conversent.net
Hartford*	860-525-6052	\$25	www.hartfordbar.org	hcba@hartfordbar.org
New Haven	203-562-5750	\$35	www.newhavenbar.org	NHCBainfo@newhavenbar.org
New London	860-889-9384	\$25	www.nlcb.org	See website for contact form

*The Hartford County Bar also covers Litchfield, Middlesex, Tolland, and Windham Counties.

How Foreclosure Rescue Scams Work. People in foreclosure are often the target of "foreclosure rescue scams." Be very careful of non-lawyers who ask you to pay a fee for counseling, loan modification, foreclosure prevention, or a "forensic audit" of your loan documents, regardless of their promises or claims. Many out-of-state attorneys target Connecticut residents: you should never pay attorneys that you do not meet. Contact the Department of Banking for more information at 1-877-472-8313 or visit www.preventloanscams.org.

Mortgage Crisis Job Training Program. The state-funded Mortgage Crisis Job Training Program is a project of The WorkPlace, Inc., in partnership with the Connecticut Housing Finance Authority (CHFA), Capital Workforce Partners, and Connecticut's workforce system. The Program helps homeowners increase their job skills and earning potential. It offers customized employment services, job training scholarships, financial literacy, and credit counseling. For information call 1-866-683-1682 or go to www.workplace.org/mortgage.asp.

Financial Assistance Programs. Connecticut's 12 Community Action Agencies (CAAs) help people meet immediate needs through services such as Eviction and Foreclosure Prevention, energy/heating assistance, food pantries, and weatherization. CAAs also empower people to improve their financial future through employment services, financial literacy training, and other programs. To locate your local CAA call the Connecticut Association for Community Action at 860-832-9438 or visit: www.cafta.org/our-network.

For more information on programs for homeowners facing financial distress, review the Department of Banking's materials on www.ct.gov/dob or call 1-877-472-8313. You can also call Info line at 2-1-1 for resources.